

PRESERVING QUALITY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MOBILE COMMERCE SERVICES AND APPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Mobile commerce is nowadays a continuously growing area, driving the need for advances in both the network characteristics and infrastructure, as well as in the available mobile devices used. The same need requires the development of quality software applications to facilitate and service m-commerce activities. This paper focuses on aspects of software quality for m-commerce services and applications, and proposes a set of quality characteristics and attributes to take into consideration during development. These quality characteristics are integrated during the analysis and engineering phases of the MobE process, which is a revised version of the spiral software process used in web engineering. The efficacy of the proposed approach in a real scenario is discussed.

KEY WORDS

M-Commerce, quality, mobile user requirements, mobile services and applications

1. Introduction

Mobile commerce (m-Commerce) services and applications are becoming more and more adopted in today's modern mobile computing society. Some factors that contributed to this end are the tremendous development of the Internet and related technologies, the understanding and exploitation of the business potentials that rest behind this development and the impressive growth of wireless mobile networks.

Recent studies have shown that the number of people using mobile devices to connect to the Internet has already exceeded that of stationary Internet usage in Japan and a similar trend is expected worldwide in the next few years [1]. This is due to various reasons, like the ability to connect to the internet or other mobile networks 24/7 to access both business and personal information, independent of user location. Location independence is the key benefit of mobile devices; in fact, wireless applications are likely to be inferior compared to their wired counterparts in all terms except mobility. Mobility can be seriously degraded though, due to difficulties arising from the limitations posed from both the mobile

devices [2] (e.g. low screen resolution, limited battery life, etc) and the mobile networks [3] (e.g. frequent disconnections, slow connections, heterogeneous networks, etc).

As the diversity of mobile applications and services increases, these limitations urge the users to demand higher quality so as to receive services quickly, reliably and securely, and at the same time to spent as little time and effort as possible in dealing with network and device problems. Providing high quality mobile applications is an important factor not only for user satisfaction but also for achieving long-term customer loyalty. Therefore, the question raised is how do we safeguard or achieve quality in mobile applications?

The objective of this paper is to suggest a new approach for promoting quality in mobile applications, aiming at enhancing existing development methodologies. Our work relies and extends the MobE process [3], which is a software process for developing mobile applications and services based on the integration of mobile user requirements with the constraints of available mobile devices and networks. What we propose is a set of quality characteristics, along with their corresponding metrics, that developers of m-applications should address and incorporate for delivering high quality products. These characteristics are combined with the phases and activities of MobE in such a way so as to reach to the desired quality outcome.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 briefly reviews the recent studies focusing on improving quality in mobile applications and presents the proposed set of quality characteristics and metrics. Section 3 describes the MobE process for designing and developing mobile applications and proposes a methodology for integrating MobE with the identification and integration of the desired quality characteristics. Section 4 demonstrates the proposed approach through the development of a healthcare mobile application. Finally, Section 5 presents the conclusions and suggests future work.

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Table of Contents Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings

1. Understanding the eBook Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
 - The Rise of Digital Reading Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in an Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
 - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings User Reviews and Ratings
 - Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings and Bestseller Lists
5. Accessing Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings Free and Paid eBooks
 - Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings Public Domain eBooks
 - Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings eBook Subscription Services
 - Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings Budget-Friendly Options

6. Navigating Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings eBook Formats
 - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings Compatibility with Devices
 - Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
 - Interactive Elements Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
8. Staying Engaged with Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
 - Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
 - Setting Reading Goals Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Mobile Commerce And Services Proceedings
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning
 - Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
 - Exploring Educational eBooks
14. Embracing eBook Trends
 - Integration of Multimedia Elements

- Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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